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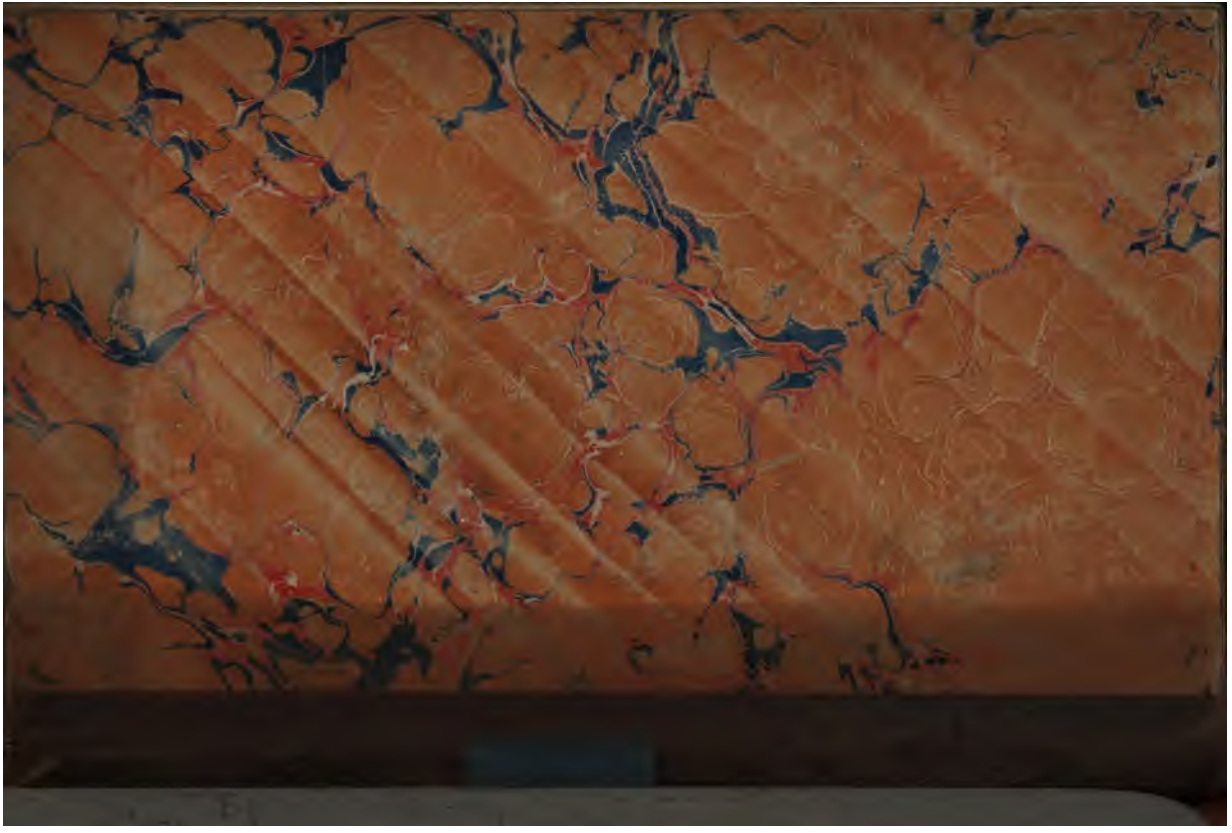

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PRINTED BY
L. AND G. SEELEY, THAMES DITTON, SURREY.

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of Scripture to be little valued, and reduce the Church of England to the same state of spiritual degradation to which they have reduced the Church at Rome.[1]

Did I not believe you to be zealous in the cause of God, and anxious to promote the knowledge and love of Christ in the world, I would not venture to address you; although I should feel it my duty to speak against many of the doctrines you are putting forward, as "unprofitable and vain." Regarding you, however, more as wandering Christians, than as decided opposers of Divine Truth, I will now set my thoughts before you, earnestly praying that *I* may be enabled so to write, and *you* so to read, that through the guidance of God we may both be given to know the mind of the Spirit, and through the same Spirit be led into all truth.

Since I do not come before you as a learned controversialist, but as a simple faithful friend, I will not attempt to systematize my sentiments, but rather try to turn your attention to the consideration of those points on which I think you in error, that you may re-examine them yourselves. It having pleased God

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which would, if their statements were true, oblige every faithful child of God to withdraw from her, as she has withdrawn from the Church of Rome.

There are various points in your Sermons and Tracts which I should wish to bring under your consideration; but the one I shall chiefly notice at present is your maintaining that *all* Church of England bishops are to be accounted true apostolical teachers, because of their descent from the Apostles, by regular succession; and that none should be received as Christian teachers who are not ordained by them. Now, however plausible such language may appear, or however we may deplore the circumstances which have led many faithful ministers to act without reference to the bishops of our church, I think that, when due consideration is given to the subject, it must be admitted that this doctrine has a strong tendency to make men value the historical genealogy of bishops, presbyters, and deacons, much more than their faith in the great and invaluable doctrines of Christ's Gospel; as also that it is, as nearly as possible, that error against which St. Paul so strongly warns, in his Epistles to Timothy, when he says that such fables minister questions rather

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a little, in earnest prayer that you, who know and love God's holy word, may be given to see what you are doing in thus upholding that most deteriorating dogma of the Church of Rome, which makes apostolical succession to rest in the persons of men, through the regular imposition of mitred hands, without reference to their fitness for the sacred office; instead of maintaining the pure and holy doctrine of a succession of faithful witnesses, shining as lights in a dark place, and testifying to the truth of God's written word by preaching Jesus "as the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth;" and "Christ *in* us" as the "hope of glory," and the only purifying, sanctifying power that can transform a sinful wicked rebel into a devoted humble Christian; or lead even the highest teacher in the church to evidence his participation in the blessings of the everlasting covenant, by seeking to purify himself even as Christ is pure.

I believe as fully and distinctly as any of you, my friends, that God has, from the beginning, committed the preservation of his word in the world to a mixed body; and that, as the guilt of Eli's sons did not nullify their ministration in the temple, so the sins of Christian ministers

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which really does exist between faithful and unfaithful pastors, is nothing less than making Christ the real, as well as the acknowledged head of all the false teachers and evil workers, that have ever been, or ever will be in his visible church, and likewise setting Him before us as the enemy who sows tares among the wheat in that church: For, if bishops who teach false doctrines, presbyters doing evil rather than good, and deacons who care not for God's word, are to be regarded as the divinely selected ambassadors of God, because of their regular ordination and admission into the established church; it necessarily follows that we must look at Christ as the head and director of those teachers; and, instead of regarding Him as warning us against them, must feel constrained to submit to their guidance and instruction. Let me then ask you, my friends, to reconsider the books you have sent into the world. Let me intreat each one of you individually to reflect, whether the sentiments you hold are consistent with the important truths contained in the written word? Let me put it to you to say, whether, if Christ be the sower of tares in the church, He can also be the head, the life, the very soul of God's chil-

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consider your own writings, and compare them with these gospel declarations; you must admit, that teaching us to expect the conversion of sinners through the instrumentality of men, who have all the characteristic features of Satan's emissaries; solely because we are assured of their regular ordination and genealogical succession through corrupt churches; is, in fact, teaching us, that Christ and Satan work together in God's vineyard, instead of warning us—as our divine Master has done—that "if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch."

It is possible, my friends, that you may start at these suggestions, and even feel shocked at the idea, that you are leading any one to think of the Lord Jesus Christ in this light, or encouraging any emissary from Satan's kingdom to appear as Christ's minister: but, however you may cover your opinions with the glittering web of specious fallacies and subtle arguments, you are most certainly doing it. The deductions I have drawn from your writings, are no more than the necessary result of a close examination of them; and so surely as your views

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on your principle, it is neither more nor less than a positive sin to obey this injunction; for, according to your doctrine, we are not to enquire into the faith or practice of any person the prime minister is pleased to appoint to a bishopric; nor are we to question the purity of the doctrines preached to us by any of the persons, he sees fit to ordain presbyters or deacons. I know you will say; 'Read the Twenty-sixth Article of the Church of England, and if you think me unscriptural, do not blame me, but your own church.'

I have read that Article: and, in doing so, greatly admired the consideration of our Reformers; who, in tenderness to such as might have thought God's ordinances injured by passing through the hands of ungodly men; inserted this article: not to bind them to obey these men by a Roman *must*;[1] but to tranquillize their fears by a Protestant *may*. If however this, or any other Article of the purest church upon earth were opposed to the simple state-

[1] Twenty-sixth Article. Although, in the visible church, the evil be ever mingled with the good, . . . yet forasmuch as they, (the evil) . . . minister by God's commission and authority, we *may* use their ministry, both in hearing the word, and receiving the Sacraments, neither is the effect of Christ's ordinance taken away by their wickedness, &c.

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God's Spirit is soon undervalued, and the mind has recourse to a variety of conceits; which draw it from the simplicity of the gospel, lade it with burthens grievous to be borne, and prepare it for various suggestions of Satan; who is ever ready to take advantage of the least decline from deep vital Christianity, to put forward his emissaries as teachers, that he may bruise Christ's heel by misinstructing his people.[1]

But you may possibly go farther, and say that the doctrine of apostolical succession is a doctrine held by all episcopal churches throughout the world. Be it so. I still however maintain that it is not held by any but the most corrupt churches as you hold it; and that it is a doctrine that should never be explained or enforced as it is in many of your writings; because, in thus putting it forward, you make ordination a charm, instead of a reasonable service, and ascribe to it a power the Scriptures never attribute to it, of making men faithful teachers; who are neither chosen according to apostolical commands, nor sanctified to the master's use by the renewing influence of God

[1] See Note 5.

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you do really believe that Christ is such a head, and his ambassadors such a body as you describe; let me entreat you to examine the very ground-work of your belief; for, whether you suspect it or not, you may rest assured that there is something wrong in the foundation upon which you are building, or that you have need to learn which be the first principles of the oracles of God. You call yourselves high-churchmen, and profess to believe that the Church of England is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets; but, if you also believed, as those apostles did, that Jesus Christ himself is the chief corner-stone of that foundation; and that everything required to be believed as an article of faith, which cannot be proved from his written word, without subtlety or deceit in explanation, ought, as St. Paul declares, Gal. i. 6—12. to be considered accursed; could you stand up, as you do now, in open defiance of this testimony, and tell us—We are not to have our senses exercised to discern the difference which really does exist between the divinely-instructed minister who desires to know nothing among us, but "Jesus Christ, and him crucified,"—and the outwardly selected shepherd "who eats the fat, and clothes him-

self with the wool, but neither heals the sick, nor feeds the flock;" which, for its chastisement, is given up to his care.[1]

As this is a most serious point, and one, on which the very existence of the Church of England as an apostolical portion of the kingdom of heaven chiefly depends, I would once more intreat you, and every minister now pressing the doctrine of apostolical succession, without reference to divine selection, and evangelical fitness, to take heed what you are doing. The Church of Christ,—or, in the language of scripture, the kingdom of heaven—though at first sown with good seed, soon, very soon, became corrupt, bringing forth tares; and believe me, every *spiritual* successor of the apostles (who alone has any right to expect that Christ will be with, or acknowledge him as his ambassador) has enough to do to guard the sheep and lambs of his flock from those who, in the character of shepherds, are sent by the enemy to harass God's children. And, if you countenance the Romish heathen doctrine, that an infidel or socinian—if kept in outward unity with the great body of the clergy, is as truly a minister

[1] See Note 7.

of Christ as one of his faithful messengers, provided his genealogical descent from the apostles is uninterrupted (I dare not call it *pure*) you are introducing into the Church of England a heresy that will eat as a canker; and soon render it as corrupt and unscriptural as that church which you, apparently, desire to be thought to oppose; while you are doing all in your power to uphold her most dangerous doctrines—I say most dangerous—because I am fully convinced that it is to this doctrine of an unholy, unscriptural succession, (which brings with it a train of errors not easily detected,) we ought to attribute the introduction of the various abominations which make the Romish hierarchy one of Satan's most powerful engines upon earth; and it is the same doctrine, with its attendant errors, that has so robbed that church of her spirituality, and so brought her under the dominion of ordinances, that she has but a name whereby to hold her place in the kingdom of heaven, while she is, in effect, dead as a Christian church—that is, dead to God, and to the requisitions of His holy word; for, unhappily, she is but too much alive to the bruising Christ's heel, by keeping man from his spiritual privileges, and bringing him under a

system of ministerial tyranny which robs him of the written word; gorges him with traditions, under the semblance of humility; and draws him from the faith and hope of the gospel, so that he is taught to rob God of his glory, and to give that honour to his teachers which belongs solely to Christ, who is "both the author and finisher of faith."

Instead, therefore, of wasting your days upon earth in contending with your more enlightened brethren, about profane and old-wives' fables, brought into the church by cunning and deceitful men, who, like their predecessor Diotrephes, loved to have the pre-eminence, let me intreat you "to exercise yourselves to godliness, preaching charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." I have read many of your works with great care and attention; but in none of them do I see the way of the sinner's acceptance with God, or the great doctrines of the gospel, dwelt on, as if you really valued them yourselves. Forms, and observances, and traditions, and references to ancient authors, fill that place in your writings, which ought to be held by those truths, which nourish the soul unto everlasting life; and even our Lord's

prayer for his people, as recorded in the xviith of John, might tell you that this ought not so to be, and that it is not with traditions of men, but with that word which is able to make us wise unto salvation, we ought to be fed. His words are—"Sanctify them through thy truth: THY WORD IS TRUTH." It is that word Christ sends his ministers to divide to us; and with that word, thus divided to us by men who love it more than their own lives, and not with ungodly professors, that He promises to be till the end of the world, causing it "to work effectually in them that believe," and "to prosper abundantly in the thing whereunto he sends it." This is no cunningly-devised fable,—no ideal fancy of a diseased imagination. It is the simple declaration of God's holy word. But you have shut your eyes to these things; you desire not the knowledge of such truths, because they would militate against your air-built systems. Having given yourselves to a certain train of thought which keeps you looking on the outward appearance of the church in the world; instead of regarding its spiritual state before God, you seek not to know "the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God," which are hidden in that precious

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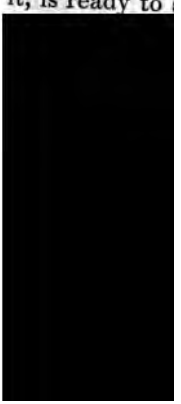

not be given by man, and must be sought from Christ alone. We know, and are certain, that he employs men as his witnesses, ambassadors, and messengers, to call us to look for this pearl of great price: but his declaration is, that none of these men can bestow it. "Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but it is God who gives the increase;" and he is so jealous of his own glory that he has not imparted this power to any human being, however high his dignity, or orthodox his opinions; for he requires us to believe that "no man can say that Jesus is the Christ, but by the Holy Ghost," and assures us in his word, that none can even see the kingdom of God, until he is born of the same Spirit; so that they who receive him are most truly said to be born, "not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Let me, then, intreat you to lay aside your pre-conceived notions of a catholic church such as you describe, which are based on a great and fundamental error; that you may sit humbly and patiently at your Saviour's feet, praying him to teach you that you may teach others. Let not your zealous energy in what you think right, nor your faithfulness to the light you possess, deceive you. We know, from scripture, that a

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With earnest prayer that the "God of ou Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, ma give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation i the knowledge of him; that you may kno what is the hope of his calling, and what th riches of the glory of his inheritance in th saints, and what the exceeding greatness of h power to usward who believe, according to th working of his mighty power;"—

I am, my dear friends, your very true an faithful servant in Jesus Christ our only Lor and Saviour,

C. S. C.

NOTES TO LETTER I.

Note 1. p. 2.

Whoever candidly considers the foundation errors of the Church of Rome, must admit that they are not those which would strike a casual observer most strongly; but, on the contrary, such as are scarcely perceptible, because of their being so completely of a spiritual nature. We should be careful, then, in such matters to look at cause as well as effect. And if we do, it will soon be obvious that human mediators were introduced into the Church of Rome, because unenlightened men (who by reason of their regular ordination were regarded as successors of the Apostles) could not understand how "by one offering Christ hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified," so that sinners "have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus," and need no other intercessor but himself.

Attending to the same rule, we shall also see that forgetfulness of the doctrine of justification by faith, or, as it is elsewhere said, of salvation by grace through faith, led to penance, mortification, perform-

ance of duties, observance of days, &c. &c. So that it is to be fully received that when the church *at* Rome forsook the written word for unwritten fables, God gave her up, and permitted the enemy to transform her into the Church *of* Rome. And we would do well to take heed that we continue the church *in* England, for, if we follow Rome's example, and transform the *in* into *of*, not merely as a mark of national distinction, but as one of pre-eminence over other churches composing Christ's kingdom, and containing his spiritual children; we may well fear lest the same judgment await us; since it is to be believed that either church or individual that seeks exaltation will find it true, that God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

Note 2. p. 5.

The doctrine of apostolical succession, without reference to apostolical faith and holiness, being the stronghold of popery, and that which keeps the church of Rome from any attempt at Scripture Reformation, we ought to be most cautious how we receive it. It is a well-known fact that it has been productive of much evil in that body, leading to questions and fables without number: would it not then be wiser in us to attend to the warnings of

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them that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart. But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes."

Hear also what he writes to Titus,—

"These things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men,—but avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law, for they are unprofitable and vain. . . . . There are many unruly and vain talkers, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, &c. &c. Wherefore rebuke them sharply that they may be sound in the faith, not giving heed to Jewish fables, and the commandments of men that turn from the truth."

If we appeal thus to the Scriptures, we have a standard within every man's reach, to try what is presented to us; but, if we admit the authority of the fathers, in matters of faith, we may be drawn into the grossest errors; for so few have either the means of examining them, or leisure to do it, that cunning and designing men may give which colouring best suits their quotations from writers, whose names we respect; or, under the sanction of the fathers, may set before us most grievous errors; for we know that many of them were greatly drawn aside, and that Origen, so confidently quoted by Dr. Hook as

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claim to the spiritual inheritance prepared for those who through faith and patience inherit the promises, than the heathen who were never baptised; and that there are numbers of ministers acting outwardly by Christ's commission, and regularly ordained into his church; who are as much to be avoided as instructors, as if a bishop had never laid his hands upon them; because they shew plainly by their walk and conversation, that they are only wolves in sheep's clothing, and not members of that succession of "faithful men," which, however ordained or set apart for the ministry, will never be allowed to fail, until all God's children are brought "to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

Note 4. p. 11.

Instead of being called upon to remember those that have rule over us, *considering the end of their conversation*, we are told by Dr. Hook and the Oxford divines, that we are to honour the teacher, however inconsistent his doctrine or practice, *for his office' sake*. The word of God, however, gives no such instruction to Christians, and we are rather led by it to believe that, while we honour the office because of its divine institution, we are to try the spirit appointed to the office, and to follow him only as he follows Christ.

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Note 5, p. 14.

We have many warnings in Scripture on this subject. "Beware, lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." Col. ii. 8. Again, 2 Cor. xi. St. Paul says, "I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy, for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ: I fear lest, by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." And again, "But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them who desire occasion, ... for such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ; and no marvel, for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light; therefore it is no great thing, if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works."

Note 6. p. 15.

There are several important points alluded to in this paragraph: 1. The different ways of holding

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discerned." 1 Cor. ii. 14. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold! all things are become new: And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given unto us the ministry of reconciliation." 2 Cor. v. 16, 18. "Henceforth we know no man after the flesh; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. We are not sufficient to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; who hath also made us able ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life." 2 Cor. iii. 5, 6. And, if this be so, instead of receiving carnal men as instructors, should we not rather dread them, and watch against their doctrines. For who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?

Note 7. p. 17.

"Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. I have laid the foundation and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereon." 1 Cor. iii. 10, 11. "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel than that which we have

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stated, two classes of persons in the kingdom of heaven, as there were two classes in the commonwealth of Israel, it becomes us to examine very particularly what the word of God says on this subject. Now in the Epistle to the Galatians, we have it distinctly stated, that "as he who was born after the flesh," under the former dispensation, "persecuted him who was born after the Spirit, *even so it is now.*" We are, therefore, as in the ancient, so in the modern Church, to look for a spiritual, and also a carnal seed: the one, sown by Christ himself, and born of him unto a lively hope, and an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away:" the other carnal, sown by the enemy, "whose minds the god of this world hath blinded, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine into their hearts." These two classes are fully described by our Lord himself, and his apostles, whose writings we are commanded to receive as his words: we can therefore be under no mistake respecting them; and woe be to us if, to accommodate ourselves to the views of unenlightened men, we so confound them together, as to lead an to believe that the tares sown by the ener are as truly a part of the church, though k

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deformities, and quiet the minds of her unhappy children, who are thus built up in a system of works, and expectations of meriting grace, as opposed to the declarations of God's word, as darkness to light.[1]

If we would please God, we must therefore free ourselves from the opinions of men, however amiable their conduct, pious their language, or nearly approaching to truth their doctrines. There is no other way of avoiding error: and, if we do so, we shall see that the Christian Church, or kingdom of heaven upon earth, instead of being a body so ordered and constituted, that we may receive instruction with safety from any and every teacher ordained to minister in it, is in fact an assembly in which good and evil men—yea, true and false teachers—are so mingled, that it is our positive duty to prove all things, and carefully to consider the end of men's conversation before we follow their faith; remembering what we, at this distant period, have reason to expect, when, even in the first days of the church, and under the teaching of the Apostle's themselves, St. Paul was constrained to warn the Philippians, to

[1] See Note 3.

mark them which walked after *His* example, because he could tell them, even weeping, that many did walk in apparent union with Christ, who were in reality his enemies, minding earthly things; instead of having their conversation in heaven, and looking for God's Spirit to work that change in them which can alone produce the fruit of good living, or subdue the unruly will of man.[1]

We are now come to that part of our subject which fills the believer's heart with joy, while, to those who look on things after the outward appearance only, it seems an inexplicable parable, or idle tale. Let me then entreat you, my friends, before you engage in the consideration of this very important point, to ask with deep humility, the guidance of Him who alone can make it plain to you. If you expect to discern it by any exercise of your own understanding, or hope to discover the true meaning of God's declarations by reference to human teachers, you will be altogether foiled in your pursuit. "The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." And, as we are now to consider, not the outward arrangements of the visible Church, but the testimony

[1] See Note 4.

of God's word, respecting the spiritual part of Christ's kingdom, which may be called, *a church within a church*, as man's soul is within his body,—though both together make but one man—it is absolutely necessary for the right understanding of the testimony, that we should feel ourselves "poor and wretched, and blind and naked;" for, until we do so, and go to Christ for that eye-salve which he counsels us to buy from him, and receive that gold tried in the fire, which alone makes us rich in spiritual wisdom, we shall never be able to discern this body, as contradistinguished from the heterogeneous mass some are pleased to call the Church of Christ. And, until we do discern it, and credit what is written respecting it, we shall never know how to discriminate between the children of God, "who are renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created them;" and the children of this world, whose minds Satan hath blinded; so as to have our hearts prepared to love the brethren *because* the image of Christ shines in them as in a glass; but shall be found among those who make the hearts of Christ's people sad, by denying them the liberty and privileges of children, while they cause his enemies to rejoice, by applying

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comprehend it. This faith is the gift of God; and the angel sent to guard the tree of life in paradise, still brandishes his flaming sword to drive away those who try to enter this paradise of Christ's kingdom, or even to look for its glories, without having humbled themselves under the mighty hand of God, whose pleasure it is, that Christ should "be made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption"—"that no flesh should glory in his presence, but that he that glorieth, should glory in the Lord."[1]

Let me then, as a sincere friend in Christ Jesus, entreat, and that most earnestly, that you will, without hesitation or delay, cast away your dependance on human writers and human wisdom, that you may come as men, deeply sensible of their own weakness and helplessness, to that fountain at which you may drink abundantly without danger and without fear. In the bible all is light and life, and love,—there we have no darkness to contend with,—no uncertainty to guard against,—no treachery to apprehend. That precious book was not written for this or that age,—for this or that church,—

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phet? "If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." There can be no medium—either receive the bible, in its plain and obvious sense, as the word of God, "which worketh effectually in them that believe," or throw it aside altogether. If it be not God's word, and a clear and faithful revelation of his will respecting man, *you* need not take the trouble of reading, or *I* of writing on this subject. It then matters not whether our teachers are ambassadors of Christ—such as that word commands us to honour, or men who value only the order and discipline of the church, forgetting that Christianity is not a religion of ordinances and observances, but a system of spiritual instruction, under the immediate guidance of God's Holy Spirit, by which new principles, new feelings, and new desires, are implanted in the mind; to wean it from its natural propensities, and fix it where true joys only are to be found. But if on the other hand, the Bible is God's written will, and that he has given it to us for our instruction in righteousness, that we may be thoroughly furnished unto good works, can it be a light matter to transfer our confidence in that precious volume, to writers, who have no knowledge of eternal things, but

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"a glorious body without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing," is composed of such mixed congregations, that many of her members, and not a few of her ministers, are as destitute of spiritual life as the walls within which they worship; so that, however excellent she may be, as an outward establishment for maintaining the forms and ordinances of Christianity in the land, she cannot be that pure spiritual body which appears in God's sight "as a bride adorned for her husband," and against which "no weapon that is formed shall prosper." Nor is this want of purity and spiritual glory peculiar to the church of England. There is not a church upon earth so one with Christ and separate from sinners as to be able to take to itself the titles of pre-eminence given to the church of Christ. We must, therefore, look for *His* church in some other way; and here it is that attention to the declarations of Scripture respecting it is so necessary. For what is it that has caused devoted Christians to separate from the mixed congregations of the church of England, but a vain expectation of collecting together a visible body of true, faithful believers, answering the description given of the church of Christ? And why is it that they form these expectations,

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general assembly or church of the first-born;" God's revelations concerning which we can never hope to understand, if we try to confine its existence to the present dispensation, or regard it only as a well-regulated body, having rightly ordained ministers and other insignia of a Christian church. Believe me, its extent and glory are of a very different kind; and if we would rightly understand it, we must have our hearts humbled to believe that they who compose "The church of Christ" are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, made to shew forth the praises of him who called them out of darkness into his marvellous light, and so truly and effectually taught of God, and educated by his Holy Spirit that they are, to all intents and purposes, "His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which He had before ordained that they should walk in them," and are the very persons spoken of in Scripture as the sons of God, the seed of Abraham, the children of God, the justified, the sanctified, &c. &c.[1]

Many are unwilling to receive this truth, because they think it then becomes necessary

[1] See Note 8.

to know, who these persons are, the number of them in each congregation, and other points concerning them, which God has nowhere commanded us to look into. Man's abuse of a doctrine is, however, no reason why we should refuse to receive it. We are not to account to our fellow mortals, but to the high and lofty one, that inhabiteth eternity, for what we believe or teach. It is therefore our duty to consider, singly and simply, what has been revealed; and not what use God's enemies have made of it. If we do this faithfully and fully, we shall at once feel satisfied with the answer given by St. Paul to gainsayers; and, instead of encouraging such questions, will refer those who ask them to our Lord's reply to his disciples, when they desired to know from him, Whether there were few that should be saved.[1]

With such considerations, therefore, as men usually ascribe to those who receive the whole counsel of God, we have nothing to do. Whether he has chosen many or few—whether he has loved them with an everlasting love, and therefore drawn them with loving-kindness; or taken them in time, by the preaching and ministry

[1] See Note 9.

of appointed instruments, according to his own sovereign will and pleasure, is not of the slightest importance to us. The fact that he has now, and always has had in the world, a church which is united to Christ as a branch to a tree—which church is as distinct from the outward visible church, though always inclosed in it, as the soul from the body—is the great point we want to understand. For, until we do receive this truth, and believe that the church of the first-born was given to Christ, before the foundation of the world, *for his own glory*, we shall be in danger of confounding it with the outward church, or kingdom of heaven, and falling into such errors as cannot fail of being deeply injurious to men's souls, and strongly opposed to our Divine Master's honour; who must never be regarded as *the head* of high-minded professors, or an unholy persecuting hierarchy, although he bears with both until the period of the church's trial is accomplished.

It was this church, this holy, universal, and divinely-selected church, and not such churches as those in Asia, Rome, England, Scotland, or any other kingdom under the canopy of heaven, the primitive Christians had in view, when they received the Apostles' Creed as a due confession

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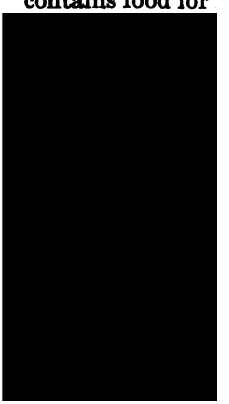

takers of the Divine nature? escape the pollutions that are in the world through lust? and obtain an entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ?' We know, that every individual who desires to dwell with God for ever, must be united to the church of the first-born, by a true and living faith in Christ its head; and we know also that every professor of Christianity, having this true and living faith, will seek to be united to a visible church, to enjoy the privileges and ordinances that Christ has provided for the support and comfort of his people, in their passage through this wilderness. But it is not union with this outward church, nor even the enjoyment of those privileges, which brings him into a state of acceptance with the Father; and it is your duty to examine, closely and constantly, what you are teaching on this subject; and to ask yourselves, whether you are preaching and writing, as if you really felt that the kingdom of God "consisteth not in meat and drink," or outward observances of any kind, but "in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

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born. It is, in fact, bringing into her a spirit of sectarianism against which she protests in her Articles, and which must inevitably lead to a breach of the *eleventh* commandment (John xiii. 34, 35.) which teaches the faithful in Christ Jesus to love one another with a pure heart fervently. For, if the saints are, as we have seen from scripture, a people scattered through the various congregations composing the kingdom of heaven, how is it possible for us to love them, and hold spiritual communion with them, if we regard the Church of England, as by law established, as the only church that contains and look on all, who are not in communion with it, as schismatics, having no part in the Christian covenant ? [1]

I could enlarge much on the glory and privileges of Christ's spiritual body, or church of the-first born, which is, in very deed, that "city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God," but will not longer trespass on your time than is necessary to state my own firm belief in an outward visible church, having distinctive marks of separation to Christ from the rest of the world,—broken into con-

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God's word, that in this church an enemy has sown tares, and that the same enemy brings false teachers into it, so that we have need of incessant watchfulness against corrupt doctrine, and must be deceived if we look for a succession of pastors to supply the places of those taken by the hand of death; without remembering that it is a succession of *faithful* men, who hold fast the pure doctrines of the gospel, that Christ has promised to strengthen and support; not a succession of outwardly selected priests, who shew the fountain from which they have been cast into the kingdom of God, by assuming to themselves the character of intercessors and mediators between Christ and his children; thus robbing sinners of the privilege of laying their burdens at the foot of the cross, and depriving believers of the comfort of knowing their Saviour, as an High Priest who, "by one offering has perfected for ever them that are sanctified," and graciously permits them "to come boldly to the throne of grace, that they may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

I believe also, that as no man is given so to discern the difference between the tares and the wheat in this church, as to be able to sepa-

rate the one from the other, without breaking the command of Christ; it is our duty to submit to the order and discipline established in the National Church of the country we live in, provided it be not opposed to the written word of God: but I believe at the same time, that dissent from this order and discipline is not schism from Christ's body, as opposition to the written word assuredly is; and I am therefore constrained to regard such Dissenters, *if faithful and holy men*, as living members of the church of the first-born; although I feel it my duty to warn them of the sin and evil of causing divisions, or sowing discord among brethren, instead of seeking the edification and purification of the national church.

I believe, moreover, that there is in this visible church, thus separated, yet united,—thus constituted a spiritual, yet, nevertheless, appearing a mixed body, such a congregation of believers as I have already described under the title of the general assembly, or church of the first-born, and that these believers form the "true tabernacle which God pitched, and not man," having each and every one of them entered the holy of holies, by the blood of Jesus, that new and living way which he hath

consecrated for us," and being all without exception taught by God himself, to hate sin, and love holiness, so that they are new creatures in Christ, separated in heart and life from the ungodly world around them, and have their consciences purged from dead works to serve the living and true God.

I believe also, that this congregation of converted sinners, is composed of the persons called saints in the Apostles' creed, and that they have access to the Father, and real vital communion with him, by his Spirit, and through the Lord Jesus Christ, who dwells in, and purifies them, making them a peculiar people, zealous of good works. I believe also that these saints, or true faithful followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, as they have real sensible communion with the Father, have also spiritual communion with one another; and that, however they may be separated by outward circumstances, or led for a season to stand aloof from each other, in consequence of the sad divisions, which have always rent the Christian Church; will (whenever they are able to lay aside prejudice, and to forbear one another in love,) assuredly find that they are all building on the same foundation, and are all made partakers of sentiments

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yet there was none of them." Psalm cxxxix. The other great truth in this paragraph is also fully established by Romans xi. 17—22. We should, therefore, take heed how we try to lessen the force of these passages, instead of giving them their full weight. If God putteth down one, and setteth up another, saying to each, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall,"—can it be right to walk as if no evil could happen to us, or to speak as if a church, whose candlestick may be removed tomorrow, were that church which shall never be moved, that city, whose builder and maker is God. Such language arises wholly from not understanding the difference between the kingdom of heaven (or outward visible church) and the kingdom of God, or general assembly and church of the first-born. It is, however, no light matter to confound them together; for doing so throws the mind into the most awful confusion; which, not unfrequently leads to a variety of vain questions and violent oppositions to the written word.

NOTE 2. p. 41.

The truth here stated does not depend upon Gal. iv. 29. alone. It is specified in many other places. Thus, Rom. ix. 6, 7, 8. "All are not Israel that are of Israel; neither, because they are the seed of

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things are passed away; Behold, all things are become new." Also 2 Peter ii. 1. "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you; who *privily* shall bring in damnable heresies." "If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost," &c. 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

Note 3. p. 42.

What an important truth is here placed before us! How different this union from union with any outward church, which can do no more than preach the word which calls men to come to Christ as condemned sinners, that they may receive out of his fulness; or administer ordinances, of which the sole benefit consists in the inward spiritual grace which accompanies them! The union here alluded to is well described in the six first verses of John xv. And it is by virtue of this union alone that we have access to God, and are made partakers of the privileges of the Father's house. This doctrine has ever been most hateful to the Romanists, and, I may say, to all carnal men: for, whatever be the character of their prevailing errors, a principle of self-righteousness dwells in their minds, which leads them to rest in their own feeble efforts to please God, instead of

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quickening power of God; so that it is by free unmerited grace, they are brought nigh by the blood of Christ, who is their peace, and saved by faith; which salvation is not of themselves, nor of works, lest any man should boast." See the whole chapter.

Art. XIII. Of works before justification.

'Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his Holy Spirit, are not pleasant to God; forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ. Neither do they make men meet to receive grace (or as the schoolmen say) deserve grace of *congruity*: yea, rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin.'

I must lengthen this note to say, with reference to the observances instituted by the Church of Rome to conceal her defects on the doctrine of justification—that I was much struck with the language of a valuable Christian minister now no more, who stated his conviction, that Roman Catholics required to read the Bible, quite as much to know what is *not* in it, as what is; for, under the plea of liberty to decree rites and ceremonies, their ministers had introduced so much attention to what St. Paul calls "the beggarly elements," Gal. iv. 9—11. that it was greatly to be

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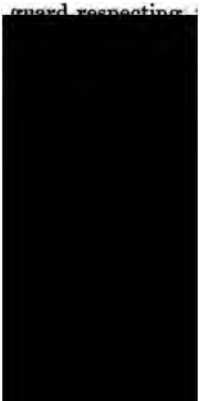

NOTE 5. p. 46.

No man, however intellectual, can possess spiritual wisdom, until he feels his need of divine teaching. Then, and not till then, he is in the way of knowing the mysteries of the kingdom of God, and the hidden meaning of scripture. Before we can obtain wisdom from above, we must renounce ourselves, and believe that the word of God may for ever continue a sealed book to the wise and learned, if they are unwilling to have it made known to them in the way of God's appointment. But, when we are really humbled and come to Christ for instruction, we are indeed ready to admit that, while it is thus hidden from the wise and prudent, who rest in their own strength, God himself reveals it unto babes; and thus "chooses the weak things of the world to confound the mighty, that no flesh should glory in his presence. Man may despise these doctrines; but our Lord himself says, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes," adding, what we ought to add—"Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

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Note 7. p. 51.

Much light is thrown on the difference between the church of the first-born and the various visible churches of Christendom, by attention to the parts of scripture here referred to. Let us, then, turn to the 60th and following chapters of Isaiah, and also to the 54th, 56th, 58th, and 59th chapters, comparing them with the descriptions given in the book of Revelations, of the New Jerusalem, or church triumphant; remembering that it is the whole body of true believers, so often called the seed of Abraham, we are to regard as composing this spiritual Zion, this city of the great king.

We may, likewise, derive profit on this subject from considering Daniel vii. 27; Micah iv; Haggai ii. 7—9; Malachi iv. 2, 3; and the security and stability promised to believers in the book of Psalms. Thus, Psalm cxxv. "They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so is the Lord round about his people for ever." "The Lord hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my

rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provisions; I will satisfy her poor with bread. I will clothe her priests with salvation, and her saints shall shout for joy," Psalm cxxxii. 13—16. See also Zephaniah iii. 16, 17. and Psalm lxviii. where the kingdom of Christ is thus spoken of—" Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion: God is known in her palaces for a sure refuge. As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of Hosts, the city of our God; God will establish it for ever. Walk about Zion, and go round about her; tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces, that ye may tell it to the generation following: for this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide unto death." And again, " God preserveth the souls of his saints: he delivereth them out of the hand of the enemy. Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." Ps. xcvii. 11. " Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined." Ps. l. 2. The consideration of God's promises to the faithful, is likewise calculated to maintain in our minds a just idea of the difference between that church, whose builder and maker is God, and the outward congregation of professing Christians; for if Christ's promises to believers are all yea and Amen for ever, not one of them can fail; and yet, we do regard them as

failing, until we see a church within a church, and a chosen divinely-taught people, hidden among tares, like wheat among chaff, or fruit concealed by leaves on a tree. The fact, however, is, that men have made a system for themselves on this subject; and that even those who profess that the just must live by faith, looking for salvation only from the obedience unto death of the Lord Jesus Christ, want to walk by sight respecting his church; whereas, it is as necessary to walk by faith here, as in the rudiments of Christian doctrine; and until we do so, our minds will be in constant confusion, and our hearts continually rebelling against the divine will.

Note 8. p. 52.

It is of great importance to remember the priestly character of all true believers: lest we should fall into the unscriptural Romish error of regarding Christian ministers as priests, ordained to present the prayers of the people, and to make intercession for them. This would be a dreadful mistake: for the great end of the gospel is to bring individual believers boldly to the throne of grace, that they may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. While the object of the Romish hierarchy, and even of many unenlightened clergymen among Protestants,

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do, he warns them most strongly "not to think of themselves more highly than they ought," because "neither he that planteth is anything, nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase."

Note 9. p. 53.

It seems very extraordinary, that so many who seem to value the Scriptures, should stand opposed to the doctrine of particular election, when it is so clearly stated by the Lord Jesus Christ, his apostles, and all the ancient prophets. We know that few believers have any hesitation in allowing that the Israelites were a people taken out of the world for God's glory, and that notwithstanding all their rebellion and hard-heartedness, they were always spoken of as a distinct and peculiar people, with whom God wrought for his name's sake, and to whom all his promises will be fulfilled, not for their sakes, or for their goodness, but for his own glory. Now there is nothing in Scripture more strongly sanctioning this view of the Jewish church, than what we find written in support of the doctrine here stated respecting gentile believers. See Acts xv. 14. The apostle James distinctly states, that Simeon, that is, Peter, had declared how God at the first did visit the gentiles, to take *out of them a people for his*

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Christian world;
1 Cor. xiv. 33, '
fusion, but of p

peculiar jealousy: and although we must be prepared to find our fellow Christians, more zealous for one teacher than for another, and perhaps considering one mode of worship more in conformity with primitive Christianity than another, we must not break the unity of the body on this account, or so press our views of church discipline, as to lead those, who believe as we do, into coldness or neglect towards any Christian who loves the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. The only demand God makes upon us, is that we should walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called, in all lowliness and meekness, and long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, and endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. And if He has given to the visible church, Prophets, Evangelists, aad teachers, it is not to make rules which harass men's consciences, but for our edification, and for the perfecting of the saints, till we all come in the unity of the faith (mind, unity of the faith, not uniformity of order,) and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man,—unto the measure of the stature of Christ."

Note 11. p. 59.

My belief is, that Christ never has left, nor never

will leave his outward visible Church without a succession of faithful witnesses. But I believe also that these witnesses are so mingled with the false teachers brought into the church by the enemy, that they are not always to be discerned from them: and that, even as regards ministers, we are not permitted to attempt a separation, although we are to examine all we hear; and to follow them only as they follow Jesus, according as St. Paul says of himself, "Be ye followers of me, *as I am of Christ.*"

Note 12. p. 63.

It has always seemed to me a matter of serious regret, that the Church of England should have laid so much stress upon unity in externals, as to oblige faithful men to leave it, on taking a different view with respect to some petty observance. And I think I am quite borne out in this sentiment, by Luther's expressions respecting councils; and that it would be happy for the cause of true vital Christianity, if each national Church charged upon itself the sin of every departure from it on points of discipline; since the word of God has given us no fixed standard on this subject, though it teaches us to stand firm as a rock in contending for the faith once delivered to the saints, and makes the love of

the brethren, or in other words, the communion of saints, a distinct evidence of union with God, by faith in Christ Jesus. The judgment of this great man upon synods and councils, is very remarkable. 'I do not think it very safe,' he says, 'to call a council of friends, for the settlement of a unity in ceremonies; for it will occasion a bad example, although it be attempted with the best zeal; as all councils of the Church from the beginning may seem to shew us. Thus, as in the synod of the Apostles, matters of action and tradition were more treated of than matters of faith, so in succeeding councils were opinions and questions always agitated, without entering upon faith. For which reason I have a greater suspicion and detestation of the shadow of a council, than I have of free-will itself. If one Church will not follow another in these external things, what need is there to compel it by the decrees of councils, which soon are perverted into institutions and traps for the entanglement of souls? Let one church therefore be at liberty either to follow, or not to follow another; principally regarding above all indifferent ceremonies, the unity of the Spirit, founded upon one common faith in the word of God: which being maintained, the difference of outward rites is only to be considered as a difference in the flesh, and elements of the world.'

I would recommend whoever is inclined, with Dr.

Hook, to confine the Church of Christ to a visible body like the Church of England, to consider the language of Peter after the conversion of Cornelius. When the other disciples reproved him, and questioned him about eating with a Gentile family, he, after rehearsing the history, adds,—" Forasmuch then, as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I that I could withstand God ? " And what are we, Christian brethren, if forgetting the evidence that God gives of his spiritual call, by causing those who had been careless negligent sinners, to walk after the Spirit instead of after the flesh, we refuse to regard them as children of God, by adoption and grace, because they see no warrant in Scripture, for some of the modes and customs we have adopted, as tending to profit in our congregations ? Surely, if this be high church doctrine, it is a high and haughty and self-exalting spirit, deeply offensive to God : and when the subject is brought before you, you may well hold your peace, and glorify God who gives repentance to sinners under one mode of teaching as well as under another, and has left you no rule respecting them, but that you should love them as brethren, because they belong to Christ.

NOTE 13. p. 63.

How different from the appearance Christ would

have us present to the world, is the character of the high churchman, trusting in apostolical succession, and confidently exalting himself above his brethren, in the strength of this unscriptural fable! What does our Lord say? "Be not ye called Rabbi, for one is your master, even Christ,—the meek and lowly Jesus,—and all ye are brethren." Also, "Call no man your Father upon the earth; for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye *called masters*, for one is your master, even Christ. But He that is greatest among you, shall be your servant: and whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased, but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Matt. xxiii. 8—12.

I cannot close these letters, without strongly recommending a work just published, entitled, 'Essays on Romanism,' by the author of 'Essays on the Church;' there is so much in that work by which the supporters of the new Oxford Theology ought to be warned as to the error of their ways, that it cannot be too widely circulated, or too carefully read.

THE END.